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EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY IN ITALY.

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Reading with a real interest the title of the article of Dr. Chiabra, "The Tendencies of Experimental Psychology in Italy," published in the October number of the *American Journal of Psychology*, I was very greatly surprised when I perused the few pages in which the author treats his subject. And, although it is always in bad taste for compatriots to contradict each other before strangers, I believe it my duty as an Italian to present to the readers of the *American Journal of Psychology*, rightly so well thought of for the exactness of its information, some facts, which will, I think, modify the opinion which my countryman has had the honor to express concerning experimental psychology in Italy and its tendencies.

Mr. Chiabra has every reason to praise unreservedly the work of two such eminent persons as Professor Mosso and Professor De Sarlo, although the first marks no other than himself and is particularly the representative of his own strong personality, and the second does not belong altogether, by his work, to the Leipzig school. But he is very wrong in speaking of a subject, about which he is not fully informed, when he ignores many others in Italy, who, without following in anybody's steps, have sought to open wide for psychology the way of experiment.

I shall limit myself to a simple enumeration, to show that, even if Italy has been the last to reach this field, it has already taken in it a considerable place.

With us the beginnings of experimental psychology have been very precocious and very important. Every conscientious experimenter in the field of physiological psychology knows the researches made by Gabriele Buccola in the Psychiatric Institute of Reggio Emilia, and published by him in 1888, in a volume entitled "La legge del tempo nei fenomeni del pensiero." Now, Buccola was, without doubt, the first to make use of lunatics for the study of the problems of normal psychology. This, as tendency, has its value, and as he was the first, the honor is one at which Italians should rejoice. The premature death of Buccola did not prevent the work of two of his friends, Guicciardi and Tanzi, whose researches in the fields of psychopathology and physiological psychology

are, doubtless, known to Mr. Chiabra. From that time the Psychiatric Institute of Reggio Emilia has always kept the tradition of experimental psychology (it was there that in 1890-1891, De Sarlo made his first mark with an important experimental study on cerebral circulation under diverse conditions) and there, in 1896, through the initiative of Professor Tamburini, was established the first Laboratory of Experimental Psychology, properly so-called, in Italy.¹

In this laboratory during 1896-1902, I worked with Guicciardi, Bernardini and many others, being the first to introduce into Italy "mental tests," which I applied first to lunatics and afterwards to all exceptional cases which I happened to come across. It is curious that Mr. Chiabra takes no notice of this.

It is the same Psychiatric Institute of Reggio Emilia, which publishes the *Rivista Sperimentale di Freniatria*. This journal has published almost all the psychological contributions of Italian workers, not only those connected with the Institute itself (as De Sarlo), but those at other centres of research, Morselli, especially, Colucci, De Sanctis, Patrizi (of the University of Modena, a pupil of Mosso and a psychologist of the first order), who has given to experimental psychology a number of very important instruments, *e. g.*, those by which he was able to demonstrate vasomotor mancinism, the crural ergograph apparatus, etc.

Nor can one understand at all the silence of Mr. Chiabra concerning the recent foundation of two chairs of experimental psychology, one at the University of Rome, occupied by Professor De Sanctis, the other at the University of Naples, occupied by Professor Colucci. This was a very important step taken by our government in recognizing the right of existence of experimental psychology, and it is indeed strange, that an educated man, as Mr. Chiabra shows himself to be, does not know the works of De Sanctis on dreams, on abnormal childhood, on attention, on intellectual imitation, or those of Colucci on ergography, on reform schools, on the psychology of dements, and his curious experiments on the ventricles of the brain.

I cannot speak here of all the workers who have from time to time made valuable contributions to experimental psychology.² I have desired to limit myself expressly to those who,

¹Professor Sergi had already at this time a Laboratory of Anthropology and Psychology at Rome. The description may be read in Delabarre's article on "Laboratoires de Psychologie," in the first volume of Binet's *Année Psychologique*.

²The works of Pizzoli on pedagogic psychology and the means of studying it,—very ingenious means, described by him in Nos. 2-3, of Vol. XXX, of the *Rivista Sperimentale di Freniatria*, deserve special mention, but I can make here only a simple *erratum compendium*.

by the *ensemble* of their works, represent a "tendency," and for that reason deserve to be mentioned in an article entitled "The Tendencies of Experimental Psychology in Italy."

On this point, I wish to remark further. In Italy, according to Mr. Chiabrá, experimental psychology follows two tendencies, that of Münsterberg and that of Wundt. The members who will go to the International Psychological Congress at Rome, in 1905, will plainly see that the question is one of simple affirmation.

I could not say whether there are reasons of ethnic psychology to explain the fact, or whether it is merely a matter of mental habits, but it is very true, nevertheless, that, although he accepts what is useful and good in all philosophies, and in all orders of thought, the Italian always and in all cases, retains much of his psychological individuality,—from outside he accepts ordinarily only the initial stimulus.

Of this we have before our eyes to-day a luminous example (although Mr. Chiabrá has not yet noted it) in the enormous impulse given to psychology here by my translation of the "Principles of Psychology" of the great American psychologist, William James. This translation dates from 1901 and in two years the first edition of more than 2,000 copies has been exhausted! For a country on the road to fortune, but still very poor, such a success, expected (I boldly confess it) by no one except myself, has something marvellous about it. Naturally this influence is very broad and more noticeable, perhaps, in the world of philosophy, than in that of psychology. I believe, however, that this publication marked a turning point in the history of Italian psychology.

In order to co-ordinate the general work now being done in Italy, I intend to publish in January, 1905, a special journal entitled *Rivista di Psicologia applicata alla Pedagogia ed alla Psicopatologia*. It is a great pity that very important experimental contributions are buried (as often happens) in specialist journals, where nobody hunts them out. If the new journal shall be permitted to centralize the work of all Italian psychologists, there will be seen springing naturally from the mass, diverse tendencies reflecting the special individuality of our thinkers and at the same time affirming the independence and originality of their thought.